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Anthropological Research.

Petition from Representatives of the Archæological Institute of America, the American Folk-Lore Society, the Anthropological Society of Washington, the American Anthropological Association, the American Ethnological Society, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science

RELATIVE TO THE

Proposed Establishment of a Department
of Anthropological Science.



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ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH.

April 3, 1907.

DR. R. S. WOODWARD,

Président of the Carnegie Institution of Washington :

SIR : The undersigned were appointed by the American Anthropological Association, the Archæological Institute of America, the American Folk-Lore Society, the Anthropological Society of Washington, the American Ethnological Society, and Section H of the American Association for the Advancement of Science—the six societies of the United States entirely or mainly anthropological in scope—to discuss the subject of the most important researches that should be undertaken for the furtherance of anthropological science and to outline a plan of research of such importance as to be worthy of the consideration of the Trustees of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

The Committee believes that the isolation of the continent of South America from the great land-masses of the Old World in recent geological times makes the study of man's appearance on the continent, and the development there of the numerous tribes, languages,

and cultures in early times, a problem the solution of which would be of supreme importance to anthropological science. In such a research the study of the racial and cultural development of the peoples of this continent, and particularly of the contact of this remote area with other parts of the world, would be of fundamental importance.

Since it is not likely that any government will take up such an international investigation, and as it is impossible for any of the existing societies and institutions devoted to anthropological research to engage in so extensive an undertaking, the committee respectfully submits the following resolutions to the Carnegie Institution of Washington :

Resolved, That the Trustees of the Carnegie Institution of Washington be respectfully requested to establish an Anthropological Department for the purpose of investigating the problem of the Anthropology of South America, with special reference to the lines of contact between the early inhabitants of that continent and other continental areas.

Resolved, That should such a department be established, its work should be based on the following four lines of investigation :

1. The antiquity of man in South America with special reference to the discoveries made in the Pampean formations. This work should be in charge of a com-

petent geologist, who should make a critical study of the strata in which the human remains have been found for which great antiquity is claimed. Associated with the geologist should be a trained archæologist, who should make archæological investigations in the region of the alleged discoveries.

2. While historically no relation has been traced between the cultures of the more advanced tribes of the Andean Highlands and those of Central America, there is a general resemblance in fundamental types which seems to indicate that either a very early connection between North America and South America existed, or that the later cultures grew up on the basis of an older type common to both continents. This investigation would require painstaking archæological researches extending from Mexico southward into the most southern regions to which the influence of Andean culture extended. The investigation of the ethnical relation between South America and North America would require particularly an exhaustive study of the early remains extending from Colombia northward through Central America, toward southern Mexico, to be correlated with the investigations now being carried on in Central America.

3. Another line of connection between South America and North America probably extended over the Antillean Islands toward the Atlantic coast of the North American Continent. The investigations of explorers have demonstrated that Caribbean and Arawak influences extended from southern Brazil northward to the eastern coast of the Gulf of Mexico; and North American

archæology makes us suspect the existence of an earlier connection, which may have extended between South America and the southern and central portions of the United States. In this research is involved an investigation of the many scattered and isolated tribes inhabiting the Amazon Valley and neighboring regions.

4. While the indications of North and South American contact are fairly definite on some lines, we have much vaguer indications of foreign influence on the Pacific coast of South America, where certain traits of culture, as well as physical appearance, suggest possible contact with the Polynesian Islands. Notwithstanding the vagueness of the indications, this question is theoretically of fundamental importance. Equally uncertain are the indications of relation with the Old World on the Atlantic side, but the possibility of contact by way of the Atlantic islands to northwest Africa may be considered.

Resolved, That to take up the four lines of research here outlined an annual appropriation of not less than twenty thousand dollars would be required; and the extension of the work, which would necessarily follow, would make it advisable that an Anthropological Department, charged with the investigation of the particular problem of the ethnical relations of South America to other continents, should have a continuous appropriation of not less than forty thousand dollars, and that its work should not be limited to a definite number of years, because even now, in the imperfect state of our knowledge, we can see that the solution of the problem

will require many distinct and important lines of research. The work should therefore be continued as long as results of importance are secured in the various lines of research.

Respectfully submitted,

F. W. PUTNAM, *Chairman*,

For the Archæological Institute of America.

ROLAND B. DIXON,

For the American Folk-Lore Society.

W. H. HOLMES,

For the Anthropological Society of Washington.

A. L. KROEBER,

For the American Anthropological Association.

FRANZ BOAS, *Secretary*,

For the American Ethnological Society and for
Section H of the American Association for the
Advancement of Science.

NOTES ON SOME PROBLEMS OF SOUTH AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGY.

TO ACCOMPANY THE REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE.

The anthropological conditions of South America are known only in their most general outlines, though reconnaissances made since 1880, particularly by French, German, and Argentine travelers, have materially contributed to a clearer definition of the problems to be solved. No thorough investigations comparable to those undertaken in North America under the auspices of the Bureau of American Ethnology and by various museums and universities have been taken up. These are most urgently needed, since the exploitation of the South American forests by mercantile companies is destroying the surviving tribes with incredible rapidity.

The complexity of the anthropological problems of South America is very great. The anatomical types of the continent are known only in the most superficial manner. Owing to a very early differentiation of the people into isolated groups, the languages spoken in South America are divided into a great number of linguistic families. Among these a few—the Tupi, Carib, and Arawak—occupy large areas and seem to have spread gradually from the plateaus of southern Brazil and of Guiana, over the neighboring plains, at different periods and in intercrossing streams. Consequently their distribution is exceedingly irregular and complicated, and the relations of their dialects must be

studied, in order to throw light upon their early history. It seems likely that this can be successfully accomplished by the same methods employed in the investigation of the early history of the great families of languages of the Old World.

Besides the tribes speaking these languages, a large number of others are found, apparently entirely isolated, whose relations to their neighbors can be determined only by a thorough linguistic and ethnographic analysis. These tribes are found in the eastern forest region as well as in the foot-hills of the Andes. Whether they represent an earlier body of inhabitants that have been absorbed by the expansion of the Tupi, Carib, and Arawak, or whether they have closer relations to them or among themselves, is a question that can not be answered until detailed studies have been carried on. Some of these tribes live on the remote upper courses of rivers, and have a very primitive culture, in which respect they resemble the large body of natives of the southeastern Matto Grosso and those of the extreme south of the continent.

Considering North and South America as a whole, the tribes of the extreme south (including those of the southeastern part of Brazil) and those of the extreme north (including the inhabitants of Arctic America and some of those of the western plateaus, so far as they have not come under the influence of more southern tribes), possess a much simpler culture than the tribes occupying the rest of the American Continent.

This large area is characterized by a number of features that stand out clearly—a strong tendency to

ritualism, frequent occurrence of peculiar types of political and clan organization, mythologies, the main traits of which show a certain degree of similarity when compared to the mythologies of other continents, and types of art which are much alike in their fundamental traits. These characteristics belong also to the ancient, more highly civilized tribes of Mexico, Central America, and of the Andean regions of South America. Nevertheless an historic relation between remote parts of America has never been proved; and we receive the impression that the fundamental cultural traits that characterize the bulk of the American Indians were distributed gradually in prehistoric times over the greater part of the continent, without, however, reaching the extreme north and the extreme south.

The most fundamental problem of American anthropology is perhaps the investigation of the causes of this peculiar unity of cultural types. Without a knowledge of the relations of the more advanced tribes of the Andes to the great eastern stocks of the Orinoco, Amazon, and Paraguay, and without a thorough knowledge of the small tribes of the South American Continent, this problem can not be solved.

The rapidity with which, apparently, certain cultural traits have spread, and also the long-continued migrations of tribes over the South American Continent, make it necessary that the ethnographic data be supported by archæological evidence. From what little we know about this subject, it seems plausible that the antiquity of man on the South American Continent is very great, and that in the large shell-heaps which are

found, particularly on the Atlantic coast, his remains may be traced to very early times. A thorough investigation of the sambaquis, or shell-heaps of Brazil, is essential for a determination of the early type of culture in the regions now occupied partly by tribes belonging to the Tupi family, partly by those belonging to the groups possessing a simpler culture, the best known of which — by name at least — are the Botocudos, a member of the extensive Ges family. French authors have concluded, from rather vague evidence, that these tribes, together with the inhabitants of the extreme southern parts of South America, represent an early aboriginal type, differing in fundamental traits from the inhabitants of the northern parts of the continent, and perhaps directly related to the most ancient type of man that inhabited South America. This important question deserves also most careful investigation and requires a correlation of the facts to be discovered by research in the shell-heaps and among the simpler tribes of South America, with the geological evidence relating to the earliest remains of man found in the Pampas region.

Another aspect of South American anthropology deals with the more advanced tribes. It would seem that, according to the later distribution of languages and cultures, the whole Isthmian region, as far north as Nicaragua, forms part of the ethnographical province of South America. The same is true of the Antillean Islands, including perhaps a portion of the southern part of Florida. The specialization of the higher types of cultures that have developed between Mexico and Peru and Bolivia is very marked; still a certain family

resemblance is easily recognized. So far, archæological investigations have not been carried far enough to allow us to reconstruct any part of the history of the development of these civilizations, which must cover a period of considerable extent. The problem of the development of American types of culture must also be pursued vigorously by inquiries in these directions.

The indications of the occurrence of common elements in the native cultures of both North America and South America are so strong that the lines of inquiry can be laid down with great exactness. Attention may be called in this connection to the important results reached by Dr. Paul Ehrenreich through the comparison of South American mythologies with those of North America and of the Old World, which have yielded interesting clues, notwithstanding the meagerness of the available South American material. Much more conclusive results in this line of inquiry can be reached when complete collections of mythologies from a number of well-selected points in South America shall have been made. Dr. Ehrenreich has shown that the mythologies of South America point to possible relations with the Old World.

There are also vague indications that some of the inventions and customs of South America may be related to the inventions and customs of the islands of the Pacific; but a much more thorough knowledge of South American ethnology is required before this interesting problem can be taken up with the hope of reaching decisive conclusions.

FRANZ BOAS.



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